

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
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SECDEF WASHDC
INFO USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USNMR SHAPE
CINC EUR VAHINGEN
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: NATO, MILI, AWACS, GW
SUBJECT: CDU/CSU ALSO SKEPTICAL ABOUT AWACS

REF: BONN 21054 DTG 151822Z DEC 76

1. IN A CDU/CSU PRESS SERVICE RELEASE DATED DECEMBER
16, FRANZ HANDLOS (CSU), A MEMBER OF THE BUNDESTAG
DEFENSE COMMITTEE, ISSUED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT FOR
THE COMBINED PARLIAMENTARY GROUP:

BEGIN TEXT:

AT THE NATO DPC MINISTERIAL ON DECEMBER 7-8, 1976 IN
BRUSSELS, THE DEFENSE MINISTERS INDICATED THEIR APPROVAL
IN PRINCIPLE FOR THE NATO AWACS EARLY WARNING SYSTEM.
HOWEVER, THEY POSTPONED THE FINAL DECISION ABOUT THE
REALIZATION OF THIS PROJECT UNTIL A SPECIAL CONFERENCE
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OF DEFENSE MINISTERS IS HELD AT THE END OF JANUARY OR
BEGINNING OF FEBRUARY 1977.

THE CDU/CSU PARLIAMENTARY GROUP IS OF THE OPINION THAT
A DECISION ON SUCH A COSTLY RECONNAISSANCE SYSTEM
CAN BE TAKEN ONLY AFTER CAREFUL CONSULTATION AND AGREE-

MENT IN THE DEFENSE COMMITTEE OF THE GERMAN BUNDESTAG. THIS ALSO INCLUDES EXAMINATION OF THE QUESTION WHETHER THE FINANCIAL EXPENDITURE AND RECONNAISSANCE CAPABILITY OF AWACS STAND IN A BALANCED RELATIONSHIP TO THE MEANS OF RECONNAISSANCE ALREADY AVAILABLE.

THE CDU/CSU PARLIAMENTARY GROUP IS ALSO OF THE OPINION THAT THE DECISION CONCERNING THIS BILLION MARK PROJECT MUST BE TAKEN WITHOUT ANY TIME PRESSURE.

IT WOULD ALSO BE IMPORTANT FOR THE CDU/CSU TO KNOW HOW DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER PLANS TO MAKE AVAILABLE THE NECESSARY BUDGETARY MEANS AND WHETHER, THEREBY, SAVINGS MUST BE MADE IN OTHER AREAS. THE CDU/CSU STATES THAT, TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THESE POINTS OF VIEW, IT ACCEPTS ON PRINCIPLE ALL MEASURES WHICH LEAD TO A STRENGTHENING OF THE DEFENSE PREPAREDNESS OF THE ALLIANCE.

END TEXT.

2. COMMENT: WHILE THIS STATEMENT BY THE OPPOSITION DOES NOT GO NEARLY AS FAR AS THE CRITICISMS EXPRESSED BY THE SPD THUS FAR (REFTEL), IT IS NEVERTHELESS A STRONG INDICATION THAT THE CDU/CSU TOO WILL WANT TO TAKE A VERY HARD LOOK AT AWACS AND ITS FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FRG. THIS IS CERTAINLY NOT UNEXPECTED, SINCE SENIOR FRG DEFENSE OFFICIALS HAVE INDICATED TO US IN THE PAST THAT CLEARANCE FROM THE BUNDESTAG DEFENSE AND BUDGET COMMITTEES WAS A "SINE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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QUA NON" BEFORE THE FRG COULD BE EXPECTED TO THROW FULL SUPPORT BEHIND THE PROCUREMENT OF THE SYSTEM.

3. DEPUTY HANDLOS HAS ASKED LEBER THE KEY QUESTION, I.E., WHERE WILL THE MONEY COME FROM AND WHAT DEFENSE PROGRAMS MUST BE SLASHED TO MAKE WAY FOR AWACS. LEBER'S RESPONSE WILL, OF COURSE, BE CAREFULLY SCRUTINIZED BOTH BY HIS OWN PARTY, SOME OF WHOSE MEMBERS ARE ALREADY OPPOSED TO THE COSTLY PROGRAM, AS WELL AS BY THE OPPOSITION WHICH IS NORMALLY SUPPORTIVE OF A STRONG NATO DEFENSE POSTURE BUT WHICH MUST ALSO CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE FINANCIAL TRADE-OFFS INVOLVED FOR THE FRG.
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